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Anouk Lang

What is it about modernism, that multivalent category riven with internal contradictions, that makes literary criticism continue to value it as a category? And how can existing understandings of modernism be squared with shifting currents of critical interest within literary studies, as scholars focus increasing amounts of attention on hitherto overlooked writers and texts beyond the centres of cultural and political influence in Europe and the United States? Guided by such questions, an investigation of modernist fiction in Australia, New Zealand and Canada needs to be situated within the larger context of geomodernist scholarship, a strain of modernist studies attentive to topics around ethnicity, colonialism and spatiality which has been influenced by interpretive strategies from postcolonial studies and critical race studies. This chapter seeks to show that these three national literatures merit greater consideration within mainstream modernist criticism because they draw attention to elements that deserve to be more visible within Anglo-American modernism: the tension between the desire to live up to aesthetic ideals from far-off metropolitan centres and being able to stand outside such ideals in order to critique and subvert them; the use of stylistic and formal techniques from indigenous art and oral culture to generate hybridized forms; and the ways taboo subject matter can function as a way of challenging social conventions. In addition, this chapter will examine the dialectical move between imitation and subversion as seen in these literatures, thereby contributing to the ongoing project to rethink modernism by troubling its definitional boundaries. It will also provide additional contexts through which to understand how material conditions such as the availability of publication outlets are significant shaping forces on the ways literary movements develop and gather momentum.

The turn towards geomodernism has been in part about understanding how the engagement with modernity emerges textually in ways that, though they may not necessarily conform to the range of aesthetic experimentation associated with established canonical works, nonetheless achieve something equally worthy of critical attention: they work through some of the central crises of the twentieth century in ways that illuminate the historical, geographical, and cultural contours of the specific national contexts in which they are produced. National literatures outside Anglo-America draw attention to the fact that modernism is a critical concept constructed largely in retrospect: the subset of features that are now considered to be emblematically ‘modernist’ do not perfectly overlap with those that writers at the time might have considered as making their work experimental, innovative, or ‘modern’ in other ways. Noting that modernism in postcolonial nations such as Canada need not be bound to the models dictated by the critical orthodoxies of the Anglo-American canon, Glenn Willmott is one critic who draws attention to the strategic dimension of the continued use of modernism as a category, observing that its very contentiousness as a category is being reframed as ‘a part of the many-voiced dialogue and many-historied dialectic proper to its interpretive power’ (2002, 7).

Cultural nationalism and the native/cosmopolitan divide

In order to understand modernism—the range of cultural responses involved in making sense of the modernizing world and an individual’s place within it—it is necessary to understand its interdependence with modernity and modernization. Modernization, in Marshall Berman’s classic description in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (1988), comprises the combination of world-historical processes—socio-economic, technological, geopolitical—on which the material basis of modern life depends, while modernity denotes the interplay and synthesis of modernization and modernism. The processes and representations that constitute modernity

are 'engaged in an urgent and inventive dialogue with their own historical conditions of existence' (Nead 2000, 8), and one of the most urgent such dialogues in early to mid-century Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand writing is the one between cultural nationalism and modernism. The work of discerning a national identity, differentiating one's country from the imperial centre in the face of a raft of inherited cultural norms and finding ways to rejuvenate outmoded literary forms, was a fraught one from the outset, given that experimental approaches were frequently perceived as inauthentic imports, and those who attempted them ran the risk of being seen as anglophilic and hence less than fully committed to the nationalist project.

This tension can be observed in the absence of literature that successfully marries nationalist content to avant-garde approaches, but it also emerges strongly in the criticism of the period. In Canada, the tension was played out most prominently through the debate between the 'native' and the 'cosmopolitan', categories used by A. J. M. Smith in his anthology *The Book of Canadian Poetry : A Critical and Historical Anthology* (1943). Smith employed the distinction to separate those writers who, in his view, engaged with so-called universal themes from those whose putative focus was turned more overtly towards Canada. This dichotomy has continued to reverberate in genres beyond poetry down through the decades, most often elevating the cosmopolitan over the native. In Australia, critical conventions in the first decades of the twentieth century worked to establish a similar dualism between realism and modernism, which was often implicitly mapped onto the distinction between the national and the international. David Carter characterizes the division as being between provincial colonialism on the one hand, and on the other, cosmopolitanism and commercialization, forces which threatened the few emergent traditions that had managed to develop (Carter 2000). In the New Zealand context, the critic E. H. McCormick perceived his nation to lack

the kind of recognizable identity that could be questioned and undermined in the first place. Without the depth of experience borne out of the long literary traditions of Europe, he wrote in 1940 in his influential volume *Letters in Art in New Zealand* that writers had no hope of producing the kind of intellectually sophisticated works which he saw as characteristic of modernism.

The dominance of nationalism as a topic on the intellectual agenda in these nations resulted in significant distortions about what categories such as the ‘modern’ and the ‘cosmopolitan’ were allowed to signify, and modernism in turn had a dichotomizing effect on literature and culture. Within New Zealand literary history, the process whereby Pākehā cultural forms gradually became acclimatized to their location depended on a continual interaction between, and hybridizing of, the two sides of the opposition between the imported and the immediate world. But rather than hybridizing this difference, the modernists sought to magnify it, by overlooking the continuities, foregrounding the dependency and belatedness of their precursors, and insisting that colonial nostalgia could produce only poor art. A similar set of associations emerges in the Montreal Group’s ostentatious rejection of nineteenth-century Canadian poetry. In Australian literature, it was not until the 1970s that authors including Xavier Herbert and Patrick White were able to interrogate the relationship of realism and modernism, and challenge the ways in which it had been overdetermined by the nationalism/internationalism binary.

For all the power of this binary edifice, however, there were some writers who managed to question and resist it. New Zealand nationalist writers of the 1930s, for example, succeeded in co-opting aspects of modernist aesthetics for the purposes of cultural nationalism. For them, the idea of the modern invoked ‘the clean lines of a discourse about national meanings

freed of colonial chatter, evasions and nostalgia' (Stafford and Williams 2002, 33), and can be related to the sense of New Zealand as a modern and forward-looking nation that emerged around the turn of the century with its material prosperity and progressive social legislation. Elsewhere, other interesting ambivalences and blind spots emerge around the division. In Australia, Patrick White's response to the divide was to cast the distinction between 'the dreary, dun-coloured offspring of journalistic realism' (1958, 39) that he despised and his own attempts to craft a more metaphysical kind of fiction in terms of the geographic divide between Australia and Europe. Yet while choosing a literary style that was an explicit reaction against nationalist realism, he chose to remain in Australia to work at his art even as he despaired of the philistinism of a public which he considered to be largely incapable of appreciating it.

Another factor stoking the fires of nationalism was the anxiety about homegrown culture being overwhelmed by mass culture from the United States, something felt with particular force within Canada. While it is an oversimplification to say that high culture was overdetermined by its association with England and Europe, and popular culture tainted by its connections with the United States, this broad formulation illustrates the difficulties authors faced in tracing a path between these two domains of cultural production that would also satisfy the imperatives of cultural nationalism.

The Canadian novelist Elizabeth Smart is an interesting figure to consider in light of debates over cultural nationalism in relation to modernism. Living most of her adult life in England and alienated from her Ottawa family and her native city, she would certainly be classed as a 'cosmopolitan' writer whose literary affiliations were entirely European. Her semi-autobiographical novel *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (published in London

in 1945 and republished 1966, although not published in Canada till 1981) is the linguistic equivalent of an abstract painting, employing experimental techniques such as disrupting the linearity of plot, foregrounding the texture of language and reconfiguring time in terms of duration, putting her work in the company of canonical modernist novels like *Ulysses* (1922) and *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). However, her geographical and chronological distance from these earlier writers allowed her to keep a critical distance from them even while exploring some of their techniques, a position that led Smart 'not only to endorse modernist practices but also to challenge the dominant discourse of modernism' (Quéma 2005, 276). Smart's second novel, published in London over three decades later, *The Assumption of the Rogues & Rascals* (1978), is a late modernist text which shares many of the stylistic features of her first novel, but is characterized by more radical experimentalism. Described by her biographer as a 'mosaic composition' (Sullivan 1991, 230), it reads as the tormented interior monologue of a woman, a single mother of four, struggling to write and to survive:

Having screamed for distraction I am driven to the scary white page, still (illogically) trembling lest anyone look over my shoulder; when not any, no, no one at all, is here, and it is for that reason that I am driven. Driven to drivel, dribble ...signs of parturition!

(Part 11, 'Trying to Write, Trying to Survive')

The gendered dimension of Smart's critique of modernism's masculinist traditions so evident in her defiant celebration of female desire and erotic pleasure in *Grand Central Station* assumes a bleaker tone here in the long aftermath of a grand passion: 'So the price of careless rapture is a twisted history chronicled by envy' (Part 7, 'Lament of a Maker'). Though Smart's intertextual references—to Beckett, Eliot, Joyce and the metaphysical poets—remain overwhelmingly within the European male canon, there are signs of female dissonance, for

instance in her rewriting of Eliot's dictum 'Give, sympathize, control' at the end of *The Waste Land*, which becomes 'To give, sympathize, entertain. I think: their needs may be greater than mine' (Part 8, 'A Bad Night in Soho', qtd in Sullivan, 324). The narrator's self-consciousness of difference in women's writing, like her 1960s reviews of women's novels for *Queen* magazine, are an early contribution towards a gendered reading of modernism, a challenge to which feminist critics turned only in the 1980s and 90s.

Influences: realism and Joycean experimentation

During the early to mid-twentieth century, realism occupied a central position within debates over modernism in these nations, often featuring as the antagonist against which more experimental approaches were pitched. In retrospect, however, the line between the two has become less clear-cut, and modernist scholars are coming to re-read realism in these literatures as a mode which could function in the same kind of oppositional way to conventional writing as modernism itself sought to do. Carter points to the short-lived Australian little magazine *Strife* to make the case that left-oriented realism in Australian writing needs to be seen as an attempt to develop a radical and contemporary aesthetic, observing that it 'might be described simultaneously as the most thoroughgoing radical aesthetic and the most conservative and constricted' (1984, 161). If a radical ideological message is considered grounds for avant-garde status, then the racial politics in Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Coonardoo* (1929)—which provoked outrage among its readers for its unflinching portrait of the sexual exploitation and physical abuse of Aboriginal women by white men—might qualify it for inclusion. In a similar vein, Jean Devanny's treatment of gender and class in her novels can be read as a form of modernist intervention. Radical politics and radical aesthetics, then, are not as easily disambiguated in settler-invader nations as they are in established imperial centres of culture, and can be included among the features

that might make a text innovative or disruptive. While the bulk of Devanny and Prichard's work was published prior to 1950, and the focus of this volume is the period after 1950, they and other authors such as Eleanor Dark are mentioned here as they are considerably more useful for understanding the response to modernism and modernity than many authors writing after this point, for whom postmodernism is often a better frame.

This reconfiguring of the realism/modernism binary, along with the imbrication of both terms into the territory of nationalism, is an example of the extent to which accounts of modernity as experienced in the metropolitan centres of Europe and the United States fall short of adequately representing modernity as it was experienced elsewhere, and how previously taken-for-granted conceptual oppositions on which understandings of modernism depend may need to be rethought. The novelist Ethel Wilson provides a Canadian example of boundary-troubling between realism and modernism. In his 1990 Afterword to the New Canadian Library edition of her *Swamp Angel* (1954) George Bowering finds the apparent simplicity of the ostensibly straightforward realist narration to be 'the most complicated trick of all' (216), as fissures in the surface of her prose offer a glimpse of much deeper moral and philosophical complexities, and the creation of a familiar world makes these subtle defamiliarizing effects all the more unsettling. Similar processes can be observed in Wilson's short fiction. In the story 'From Flores', first published in 1961 in *Mrs Golightly and Other Stories*, a form of *ostranenie*, or defamiliarization, is at work: what seems at first to be a 'comfortably monological' narrative is disrupted by the intrusion of the authorial voice, which disturbs both the chronological order of the story and the narratological illusion, and transforms what appears to be a conventional story into a more "dialogical" and contradictory one' (Bjørhovde 2004, 130–1). In New Zealand, Frank Sargeson was the central figure challenging prevailing realist conventions, developing in his short fiction in the

decades leading up to the 1950s an aesthetic of spare, pessimistic social realism which drew praise for its economy of language and stylistic austerity. In deploying a demotic idiom in strange and alienating ways, his work provides a marked departure from existing national literary traditions. One contemporary critic, McCormick, saw Sargeson's volume of short stories *Conversations with My Uncle* (1936) as drawing on a New Zealand vernacular to simultaneously construct a new literary form, and also give voice to local and regional traditions that had previously been inarticulate. Sargeson's work also registers the influence of other authors, with echoes of Mansfield emerging in various stories including 'An Affair of the Heart', and Hemingway's sparse diction and subject matter coming through in pieces such as 'An Englishwoman Abroad'.

Perhaps the most significant modernist presence within the literatures of these nations is that of James Joyce, not just for his influence on fiction writers, but also because the critical response to authors who engaged with him can be an illuminating window into the contexts in which they were attempting to break new ground. In New Zealand, his influence emerges most clearly in the short fiction of Maurice Duggan, for example in 'Guardian' and 'In Youth is Pleasure' (both 1956), which are redolent of the stories in *Dubliners* both for their critical stance towards the Catholic church and their technical accomplishments. In Australia, suspicions of Joyce ran quite high, something exacerbated by the banning of *Ulysses* from 1929 to 1937 and then, under pressure from Catholic organizations, from 1941 to 1953. Astley's *Girl with a Monkey* (1958), for example, was found by the *Bulletin* to be a promising first novel, but was dismissed for having a style which was too indebted to Joyce, with 'too much artifice, too much parade of erudition' (qtd. in Sheridan 2011, 64). By contrast, across the Pacific the comparison to Joyce was much more favourable for a novel which was finished in British Columbia and published in London, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*

(1947). In his Introduction to the novel, Stephen Spender points approvingly to the way that while Joyce and Eliot employ myths and symbols to lift their work out of the current historical moment into a generalized cosmic consciousness, Lowry uses them to exemplify a very particular local time and place. In *October Ferry to Gabriola* (begun in British Columbia and published posthumously in 1970), similar uses of modernist tropes are made, for example relocating the waste land to the Canadian wilderness. The fullest expression of Joyce's influence on Canadian fiction, however, was A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll* (1951). Klein, known primarily as a poet, spent decades working on an exegetical explication of *Ulysses*, and *The Second Scroll* bears witness to this obsessive attention. The narrative, which is replete with Biblical and mythological allusions, traces the journey of the Jewish people via the epic wanderings of the narrator's elusive Uncle Melech, and as with *Ulysses* it is structured around the familiar divisions of a mythic text, the Pentateuch. Like Joyce, Klein was a writer with a keen attentiveness to intercultural frictions and transitions, and *The Second Scroll* works away at the problem of how to preserve one's Jewish heritage and identity while translating it into a form appropriate for a new culture. In other writers, Joyce's influence emerges not just stylistically but through content and structure. Mavis Gallant explores the idea of epiphany in her stories, using it to probe the nature of subjectivity and to manipulate it for formal ends. Rather than a moment of illumination that provides closure for a linear plot, Gallant's epiphanies are moments of mystery that are imbued with understanding and recognition, a strategy which has implications for the form of the short story. Gallant's treatment of this prototypically modernist trope—so closely connected to Joyce—is an example of the ways authors in postcolonial nations were investigating the same kind of problems around representation and form that were preoccupying European and American writers who were dissatisfied with reigning literary conventions. However, the efforts of the former group are next to invisible within mainstream modernist criticism.

Indigenous interventions

Geomodernist scholars including Simon Gikandi and A. L. Nielsen have drawn attention to the ways in which the edifice of Western industrial modernity was dependent on the labour of African slaves, and have argued that African experiences of exile, exploitation, and transculturalism must therefore be recognized as foundational acts for modernity. This move, which necessitates a thoroughgoing re-evaluation of many of the assumptions about where modernism had its beginnings, has brought a welcome shift of attention to black and minority experiences and writings around the globe, but it is notable that among these, the voices of indigenous writers have so far been largely absent. As Saikat Majumdar points out, this is a significant omission within literary criticism, given that narratives of modernity and colonialism in the early twentieth century bear witness to the violence and conflict between settlers and indigenous peoples, and that these conflicts left their marks on both settler writing and also indigenous cultural products throughout the century. What could be termed a modernist sensibility—the use of language and the fabric of textuality itself as a defamiliarizing mechanism—emerges most strongly within the writings of Māori authors, particularly since the Māori cultural renaissance. Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986) and Keri Hulme's *the bone people* (1984) employ Māori cultural patterning such as narrative strategies that evoke the performance modes and spaces of traditional oratory (whaikorero), and art forms such as weaving (raranga) and carving (whakairo), and offer different ways of representing space time, that recurrent focus of modernist experimentation. In *Potiki*, familiar modernist anxieties emerge around the subject of change, both aesthetic and technological, but with an added anti-colonial charge:

It was as Toko had said, the stories had changed. And our lives had changed. We were living under the machines, and under a changing landscape, which can change you, shift the insides of you.

Above all we lived under the threat and destructiveness of the power people, and we had only really begun to understand the power. (Part 2, ch 23)

For indigenous peoples, the encounter with settlers and their variants of modernity meant not just experiencing the dehumanizing impact of industrialization, but having to confront profoundly different ways of living and structures of social relationships.

Another Māori writer whose work forces a reconsideration of modernism is Witi Ihimaera. His novel *The Matriarch* (1986) includes a wide range of different forms from both Māori and Pākehā culture, a structural intervention which directs attention to the futility of attempting to ground the novel's meanings in a single cultural origin. *The Matriarch* further challenges novelistic conventions by rupturing the identificatory contract that usually underpins a novel, and thereby prevents Pākehā readers from occupying the comfortable position of an impartial witness or a sympathetic observer who can share in the narratorial perspective without any friction. This and other texts of Ihimaera's thus unseat generic conventions in ways that chime with modernist iconoclasm but are sufficiently distant from Anglo-American modernist critical paradigms as not only to unsettle European ideas about Māori but also to employ a cultural alienation effect that works through and against genre conventions. A later volume, *Dear Miss Mansfield* (1989), is a novella and collection of stories whose intertextual echoes simultaneously pay homage to and offer a critique of his celebrated literary progenitor. Ihimaera interrogates Mansfield's legacy from the perspective of late twentieth-century New Zealand, and rewrites some of her stories to account for a

Māori perspective. The abduction of a little white girl in Mansfield's 'How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped' is told from the perspective of the two Māori women, who face imprisonment and shame as a result of what the text suggests was actually an act of kindness: 'But it made us sad to see her all alone. A tamariki all alone - no good. Especially near a hotel with all those boozers around. So I said to her, "You want to come with us, Pearl Button? Haere mai koe ki te marae?" And she nodded.' ('The Affectionate Kidnappers')

Works by indigenous writers in Australia and Canada have also come into prominence in the last few decades of the twentieth century, a period that saw a burst of literary activity concomitant with a rise in cultural pride and political action among indigenous groups across the world. If their texts are excluded by the conventional periodization of Anglo-American modernism, we miss the possibility of seeing a very differently inflected set of textual experiments, ones which not only act as an invigorating intervention within the literary landscape, but which are often driven by political imperatives. Grace, for example, has identified as a force in her own work the need to lead non-indigenous readers to a fuller understanding of Māori cultural concepts. To read these works as modernist is, emphatically, not to subsume their differences under the sign of a narrowly western conceptualization of 'modernism' and to force them to fit inside a narrative constructed by a literary critical establishment that has in so many ways marginalized and erased them. It is rather to attempt to defamiliarize the category of modernism itself, in order to observe where its European and American biases have excluded particular textual and cultural possibilities, and to aim for a richer, more complicated and more conflicted vision of it as a movement. If, as Baudrillard contends, the contemporary orders of signification and of political economy emerged simultaneously within Western industrialized nations in historically and culturally specific ways, one way to trace this emergence is to consider whose subjects and identities are

represented within literature. A significant part of the achievement of indigenous authors' writing-back strategies is that they not only seek to overturn colonial beliefs about colonized peoples, but also function as a fundamental attack on dominant orders of signification: a latter-day, postcolonial version of making it new.

Individual countries

In addition to those authors already mentioned, there are others associated with modernism in these countries who merit further attention. In Australia, Patrick White and Christina Stead are the novelists most closely linked with the movement. Both were oriented very strongly to the world beyond Australia, travelling and living in Europe and the United States, and both populate their texts with exiles and wanderers, individuals who are rejected by their societies but endorsed by the text as visionaries, and differentiated from the stultifying social milieux in which they are trapped. Stead's novels *The Man Who Loved Children* (1941) and *For Love Alone* (1945) consider the restrictions placed on women, and explore the alienation experienced in modern urban environments. Susan Carson comments that in the work of both Stead and her contemporary Eleanor Dark, the transnational functions as a barometer of their encounters with modernity, indicating the increasing complexity brought into their lives and their work by the new cultural, political and social conventions that were being transmitted from around the world. Dark's novel *The Timeless Land* (1941)—the first of her historical trilogy whose other volumes are *Storm of Time* (1948) and *No Barrier* (1953)—explores intersubjectivity, consciousness and different scopes of time. It is also important to note that the modernist influences within Australian fiction that come via Stead and Dark predate the work of Patrick White, the writer whose place in the canon of Australian modernism is most assured and who, like Stead, is considered at greater length elsewhere in this volume. White's prose pushes insistently at the limits of stylistic conventions, as is evident in this passage

from *The Twyborn Affair* (1979), a late novel in which he probes the fluidity of gender identity and the creative varieties of human sexuality. Here, shifts in tense and incomplete grammatical structures are used to evoke Eddie Twyborn's fall from his horse in a moment that marries bewildered agony to sensory epiphany:

He had even developed a kind of affection for this gelded monstrosity the Blue Mule, dipping, swivelling, dislocating, then re-uniting in its various components beneath his thighs. When the animal snorted and shied. The tangled mane was cutting into the rider's fingers. Before he started falling. A sawdust puppet dragged. Trampled amongst sparks from the road. Under this feverish green sky, curlew calls, cushions of bobbing grey-white scum, the gobbets of a horse's vegetable dung, flow of blood, of water, of blood. (Part II).

The eloquent dislocations of language convey the way Eddie drifts in and out of consciousness, while the description of the Blue Mule evokes a textual rendering of a Cubist painting, an equine version of Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) transposed to the Australian bush.

White's shadow looms large over the work of many authors, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, including Jessica Anderson, Thomas Keneally, David Malouf, and Hal Porter. His impatience with the vulgarities and insincere social niceties of contemporary Australian life has echoes in the fiction of Porter, for instance, in which the modern world is portrayed as pretentious and deceitful, and set against the simplicity of an irrecoverable past. This form of nostalgic conservatism provides another avenue into understanding the complexity of the response to modernism: a retreat to a more desirable past as a means of dealing with an alienating and discomfiting present. This stance towards industrialized modernity also

characterizes the work of the New Zealand writer Keri Hulme, who, in Mark Williams's words, is engaged in resisting 'a world in which the old "natural" bonds have been replaced by the "artificial" bonds of money and machinery' (1990, 93). In Porter, the reaction against a degraded Australian modernity is expressed through stylistic and formal experimentation, with his biographer Mary Lord observing that when the novel *A Handful of Pennies* was published in 1958, contemporary reviewers 'found its surface brilliance and verbal density baffling' (1980, xiv). The obverse phenomenon can be observed in the work of Kenneth (Seaforth) Mackenzie, whose novel *The Refuge* (published in London in 1954) employs a resolutely realist style to narrate various dramatic plot turns including murder, incest and adultery, illustrating that thematic content which pushed at the boundaries of convention was not necessarily aligned with experimental or semantically obscure styles. Further evidence of the pervasiveness of White's influence can be seen in the work of Christopher Koch, where realism is tempered by a persistent awareness that the world of experience is not limited to the material but must also account for unseen dimensions including the symbolic, the mythic, and the oneiric.

Most of the Canadian fiction that bears traces of modernism's influence came out of the 1950s and 60s, and much of that was produced by writers whose regional focus or expatriation meant that they fell outside the Canadian literary mainstream. Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* (1959) is generally considered the first Canadian modernist novel. Fusing biblical and Indigenous myths in her relocation of an Eliotic waste land to the dry uplands of British Columbia, the text plays with narrative voice, moving in and out of apparently straightforward description and the interior perspective of characters in order to defamiliarize ordinary reality. As with White, external reality is much less important than the inner landscape of the characters, cut adrift from one other in an alienated world. Watson's second

novel, *Deep Hollow Creek* written in the 1930s, was published in 1992. Although not as experimental as *The Double Hook*, it shows her playing with some of the same ruptures in language and narrative perspective, and building up a prose style with a rich symbolic density.

While Robert Kroetsch's claim that Canadian literature skipped over modernism and evolved 'directly from the Victorian to the Postmodern' (1974, 1) is more polemic than disinterested description, it is nonetheless fair to say that most Canadian authors were more likely to employ certain aspects of modernist aesthetic practice selectively rather than entering into it wholesale. Morley Callaghan's texts attend to the psychological realm, for instance, while Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952) and *The Cruellest Month* (1963) play with linearity and narrative expectations, and interrogate the ways in which reality manifests itself to the senses. *The Mountain and the Valley*, which relates the artistic development of a failed male writer growing up in rural Nova Scotia, has been recognized by contemporary critics as stylistically modernist, though it lacks the treatment of urban alienation which habitually accompanies a *bildungsroman*. Mordecai Richler would seem paradoxically to combine modernist urban alienation and expatriatism in his early European novels *The Acrobats* (1954) and *A Choice of Enemies* (1957) with a very specific Montreal affinity in novels like *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959) and *St Urbain's Horseman* (1971), all of which explore modernist techniques in a satirical mode. In the stories of expatriate writer Mavis Gallant, irony is used in order to leave open multiple possibilities of meaning, while clusters of images and points in time, memory, or perception recall the innovations of Mansfield. Her novel *Green Water, Green Sky* (1959), set in Venice and Paris, is a fragmented narrative which charts a young Anglo-American woman's descent into madness.

There are echoes of high modernist diction as the prose swirls across the borders between reality and fantasy.

As in Canada, the first stirrings of modernism in New Zealand emerged not in full-length novels but in other genres, with Katherine Mansfield the most important figure. Her stories first appeared in the 1910s in the magazines *New Age*, *Rhythm*, *Blue Review* and *Signature*, and her first collection, *In a German Pension* (1911), was published in London. However, it was not until the 1930s and 1940s that a modernizing literary nationalism began to emerge, seen for example in the stories Sargeson published in the radical little magazine *Tomorrow*. Maurice Duggan also wrote short fiction but took a different approach to that of Sargeson and others writing in the mid-century, eschewing social realism and embracing complexity and difficulty. Duggan's description of his story 'Six Place Names and a Girl', published in *Landfall* in 1949, reveals his strong Joycean influence; he characterized it as 'perhaps less a story than a prose celebration of a topography and a time that, in rediscovery and re-creation, moved me strongly enough to force me away from what had become a habit of rhetoric' (qtd in Stead 1981, 8). Here, prose becomes a way to explore new narrative techniques and to break through the stultifying habits into which language has fallen. A more mature story, 'Along Rideout Road That Summer', published in *Landfall* in 1963, addresses the disjunction between the real and the ideal and is replete with literary allusions, as well as presenting the problem facing colonial writers of the discrepancy between an inherited literary tradition from England and lived reality in New Zealand. The two tensions are rolled into one resonant image when the young narrator, reciting 'Kubla Khan' in an '[a]lmost happy' way while bouncing around on a tractor, gets 'to the bit about the damsel with the dulcimer and look[s] up to see the reputedly wild Hohepa girl perched on the gate, feet hooked in the bars, ribbons fluttering from her ukulele' ('Along Rideout Road That Summer').

Mark Williams observes that modernism did not emerge as a forceful presence in New Zealand fiction until the 1970s, and, in common with other international literary currents, took shape in ways that aligned with established literary preferences and norms (1990, 211). Janet Frame's work is representative in this respect, as it can be aligned with modernism for its stylistic experimentation and its exploration of modes of representation and perception which transcend literary models imported from Europe and the United States, but is suffused by an awareness of its decentred position. Frame's first novel *Owls Do Cry* (1957), is characterized by Lawrence Jones as 'the best impressionist novel of the period' (1998, 176) while *Living in the Maniototo* (1979) can be situated within the modernist tradition for its deconstruction of authorial voices and the way it encodes a shifting site of consciousness as a presence within the text, while also aligning itself with a postmodernist mode through its language play and metafictional foregrounding of the act of writing. Critics have pointed to Frame's deconstruction of an economy of imperial centre and colonized margin, although postcolonial and postmodernist concerns are ultimately subjugated to an essentially modernist vision in which both the artist and language itself are potentially redemptive in a world marching blindly towards apocalyptic self-destruction. Keri Hulme's Booker Prize-winning *the bone people* (1984) is recognisably modernist: its poetic prose is episodic and fragmented, moves unexpectedly between tenses, employs non-normative grammar in places, and plays with stream of consciousness narration. The eclecticism of Hulme's writing and its evocation of different cultural, linguistic and mythic sources is an illustration of the way English and Māori can be merged into a new vocabulary, one which is better able to express the complexities of postcolonial life in contemporary New Zealand than either of the two individual cultures on their own. The fiction of C.K. Stead, by contrast, is situated more overtly within the tradition of European high modernism, both in its stylistic similarities with

the sparse precision of Imagist writing, and in its ideological commitment to the centrality of canonical European literature and culture.

An individual writer's adherence to experimental styles and modes does not necessarily hold constant over the course of a whole career, and this is amply evidenced in the literatures of all three nations. Mordecai Richler and Maurice Duggan are among the writers who flirted with modernist diction and ideas only to later abandon or moderate them. The Australian novelist Thea Astley gives some insight into why a young writer might be attracted to experimental modes. In 1958, after the publication of her first novel, *Girl with a Monkey*, she wrote to a friend about her desire to produce a new kind of novel, stating that the book was not intended to be a novel so much as a study in emotions: 'Technique interests me far more than characters or plot at the moment and until I find a style that I feel happy about I shall probably go on labouring with insignificant people performing routine tasks' (Sheridan 2011, 53). Engagement with modernist currents, then, needs to be understood in light of the development of individual writers, as well as within the broader contours of national literary history.

Modernist fiction and publishing infrastructure

No literary movement takes place outside the material conditions of the publishing infrastructure which makes it available to readers and literary critics, and what remains of work at the coalface of radical experimentation in the twentieth century is largely comprised of the writing that made it to publication. Other traces of modernist engagement may be found in less accessible places—archives, unpublished correspondence, ephemera, popular and middlebrow publications—and these can confound the broader contours of accounts of the movement's development such as the one I have been constructing here.

In the Anglophone settler nations, whose populations were dwarfed by Europe and the US, the publishing infrastructure was correspondingly a great deal smaller. Of these three countries, Australia was the one where modernism flourished more readily in fiction than in poetry, but many Australian novels with modernist tendencies found their first publication overseas. Chester Cobb's *Mr. Moffatt* (1925) and *Days of Disillusion* (1926), two early novels which included occasional forays into a stream of consciousness style, were both published in England. Patrick White's novels, which were without exception all published outside Australia, were critically acclaimed by British and American critics before they found widespread acceptance in Australia. Another feature of publishing abroad which negatively affected the building of momentum around Australian modernism was that publishers in different countries had different markets to think of. Christina Stead's American publisher famously requested that she change the setting of *The Man Who Loved Children* (1941) to Baltimore, something which made it more difficult for Australian readers to connect with the narrative. Five years later, Stead's American novel *Letty Fox: Her Luck* (1946), was published in New York and banned in Australia from 1947 to 1958 on the grounds of obscenity, for its depiction of the cosmopolitan life of a heroine who energetically pursued love affairs before eventually settling down to marriage. Censorship of this sort influenced Jessica Anderson in the 1960s to seek publication in Britain. (She began to publish in Australia only in the late 1970s.) The fact that these books, where writers were pushing at the boundaries of literary conventions, were difficult to obtain in Australia and also often had small print runs, was significant in delaying their recognition back home, and impeded the establishment of literary coteries and writers' communities such as could be found in New York, Paris and London.

These difficulties were as real in Canada and New Zealand as in Australia, and in all three countries, as in Europe and America, little magazines were a crucial part of the publishing infrastructure of modernism. In New Zealand and Canada, avant-garde impulses emerged most prominently in poetry, due partly to the fact that it was much easier to publish unconventional writing in the shorter formats particular to little magazines than it was to attempt to convince a publisher to take a chance on a long-form text that might not recoup its costs. Little magazines were, in addition, not simply the vehicles for publishing work with a modernist bent, but also places to air critical responses to new literary developments. In particular, little magazines published under the auspices of, or with connections to, universities were important in providing a platform for experimentation, mostly for poetry but also for fiction and criticism.

In New Zealand, the journals *Tomorrow*, *Kiwi* (the magazine of the Auckland University Students' Association) and *The Phoenix* (published by the Auckland University College Literary Society) were important organs for supporting the growth of a national literature, not only for reviewing works by and about international authors such as Sinclair Lewis, Pearl S. Buck, Joyce, Lawrence, and Rilke, but, more importantly, for the groups of creative and critical thinkers they brought together. For *The Phoenix*, this included James Bertram, R. A. K. Mason, Allen Curnow, Blackwood Paul, Jean Alison, Hector Monro, and J. A. W. Bennett. A recurrent discourse of modernism as contravening good taste and middle-class social norms emerges from a number of these magazines. When in the early 1930s *The Phoenix* published Rex Fairburn's poem 'Deserted Farmyard' (later published in Fairburn's *Collected Poems* in 1966), a realistic if somewhat squalid portrait of a farm with flies, rats and dying animals, the Professorial Board of Auckland University College deemed it to have offended 'against the canons of decency and good taste'. It recalls the well-known episode in

the annals of Australian modernism when Max Harris, editor of the little magazine *Angry Penguins*, was in 1944 prosecuted for publishing obscene material in the form of the work of the fictional poet Ern Malley which had been constructed as a hoax to make a mockery of Harris and modernism more generally. Even if to twenty-first century eyes these little magazines do not appear to have contravened convention with particular force, such judgements make it clear that they attracted the censure—and foregrounded the anxieties—of the establishment, while laying the ground for literary innovations in the years to come. Roughly contemporary with *The Phoenix* was *The McGill Fortnightly Review* in Canada, published under the auspices of McGill University from 1925 to 1927. It too brought together a group of male writers who would become some of the most influential voices in poetry and criticism in Canada in the decades to follow, including Klein and the biographer of Henry James, Leon Edel, and was also held in suspicion by the university authorities. While these somewhat marginal publications predate the 1950s, they are relevant here in their role as crucibles for the development of writers who, to the extent they engaged with modernism, tended to do so earlier in their careers and typically prior to the 1950s. The association of these periodicals with universities adds a further layer to the reception of canonical modernist authors that complicates the picture arising from published works alone, as they furnish an example of the way modernism's development in these three settler countries differed from its expression in Europe and the United States. In the latter, the journals which were most important for publishing modernist work were rarely linked to universities, but instead were supported by patrons or else found other ways of financing their activities. The little magazines open to modernist work in the postcolonial nations were more amateur and financially precarious than their Anglo-American counterparts, but nonetheless need to be recognized as providing a forum for both writers and critics wanting to engage with modernist aesthetics and ideas.

Investigating modernism's development in Australia, New Zealand and Canada is much more than an exercise in postcolonial inclusivity. Critical understandings of the movement have changed significantly, with scholars becoming increasingly aware of how biases against women and non-metropolitan writers have shaped the way the concept has come to be understood, so that examining the literary output of writers in these countries in light of this category—whose institutional and canonical prestige shows no sign of abating—is generative for the discipline of modernist studies. It was impossible for writers around the globe to avoid the influence of literary developments in centres of political and cultural power, and for there to be a certain derivative quality to some of these responses. What is just as important as charting this influence is elaborating the ways that elements specific to these settler-invader societies such as the fading of the British Empire, the forces of cultural nationalism, and encounters with indigenous peoples, reveal modes of grappling with modernity to which canonical modernist scholarship has been insufficiently attentive. Once we begin thinking of modernism in terms of its transnational conversations, these so-called 'alternative' modernisms stop looking peripheral and start looking increasingly transformative, offering the possibility of revealing new insights about a movement that, even after a century, retains the power to surprise and disturb.

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